

USS CONSTITUTION SELF-GUIDED TOUR

The life of a frigate: USS Constitution's Timeline

Welcome aboard USS CONSTITUTION, the oldest commissioned warship afloat in the world, launched October 21, 1797. Please walk toward the bow.

The guns here on the spar deck are carronades that fire a 32-pound solid shot out to a kill range of 400 yards.

Boats would be stored on the upper decks of the ship, including two 28-foot whaleboats on the back or aft section, and on the main hatch, our 36-foot pinnace, the largest carried by the ship. The angled pipe ahead of the ship's bell is the "Charley Noble" in the galley stove smokestack.

Please go down below by one of the nearby ladders (stairs).

You are now on the gun deck.

There are 30 24-pound long guns on this deck. They weigh about 3 tons each and their shot can pierce two feet of wood at 100 yards. The authentic names over the gunports are those elected by the early crews. On a quiet day at sea the area between these guns was given over to repair and maintenance work. (Please go forward.)

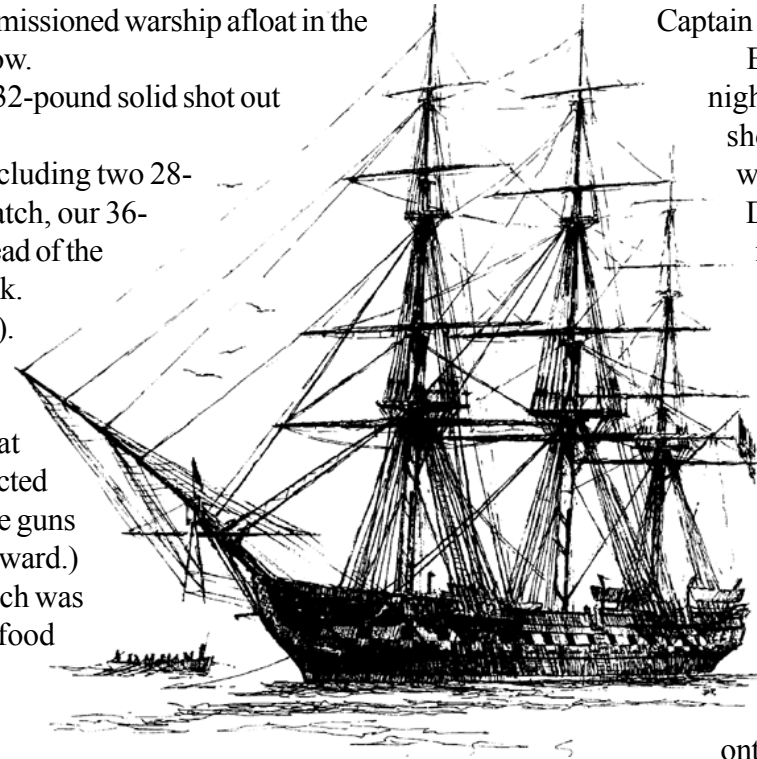
This is the camboose, or galley stove. On the hearth, which was also used as the forge, and in the three large installed kettles, food was cooked for the 400-500 man crew. (Please move aft.)

Also on the gun deck are three artifacts that were essential to life at sea. The Scuttlebutt was the ship's drinking fountain, where the crew gathered to talk about the day's events. The harness cask was a barrel where meat for the next meal was stored. The grog tub contained the daily ration of diluted rum or whiskey.

Farther aft are the bilge pumps, used to keep the ship free of water. In times of battle, the deck was flooded to extinguish any burning embers or hot sparks.

Next is the anchor capstan, where 70-75 men heaved around on the bars in the sockets to hoist the 5400-pound anchor.

All the way aft are the Captain's quarters. Here, in the forward cabin, peace treaties have been signed and dignitaries, such as Pope Pius IX in 1849, entertained. The smaller cabin gives the



Captain greater privacy, and has a little sleeping cabin off each side.

Below us, on the berth deck, sailors would set up their hammocks each night and 250 men at a time would occupy the open bay area. After a few short hours, a second crew would turn in for the night and the first crew would stow their hammocks in netting on the spar deck and return to work. During the day, the crew ate picnic fashion here, in small groups of not more than a dozen men.

Further below was the "cockpit", which was used as an operating room for the surgeon.

Further aft were the warrant officers' staterooms, dining area and "steerage."

In the orlop are storerooms, powder magazines, and the armory.

Now please find the nearest ladder and return all the way to the spar deck, which is the topmost deck.

Back aft is the ship's wheel, which required four men to control the ship's sailing direction. Forward of the wheel, also called the helm, are the two binnacles, which hold magnetic compasses.

Above you, on each mast, is a "fighting top." Marine snipers fired onto the decks of enemy ships from there. The largest "top" weighs 5 tons.

Its mast, the mainmast, is 220 feet in length, from keel to truck.

We hope you have enjoyed your short visit to USS Constitution. Known as "Old Ironsides," she is a national icon and a symbol of the Navy and Marine Corp's spirit and dedication for over 200 years.

Please note that the USS Constitution Museum, located just across the pier, contains a great deal of the ship's original documents and other items of historical interest..

To see and learn more about "Old Ironsides," please visit our website:

www.oldironsides.com

1794, March 27 - Naval Armament Act signed by President George Washington.

1794-1797 - Under construction in Boston.

1797, Oct. 21 - USS Constitution launched.

1798, July 22 - Ship puts to sea for first time.

1798-1801 - Quasi-war against France, protecting merchant shipping from French privateers.

1803-1805 - Barbary Wars.

1812, Aug. 19 - Constitution vs. HMS Guerriere. Ship earns nickname "Old Ironsides."

1812, Dec. 29 - Constitution vs. HMS Java.

1815, Feb 20 - Constitution vs. HMS Cyanne, HMS Levant.

1828-1833 - Rumored ship will be scrapped

1830 - Oliver Wendell Holmes writes poem "*Old Ironsides*." Congress approves funding for restoration.

1844-1851 - "World Cruise." Constitution travels over 52,000 miles around the globe.

1860-1870 - Constitution serves as a training ship at Naval Academy.

1882-1897 - Moored in New Hampshire serving as a receiving ship for new recruits.

1897, Sep. 21 - Constitution returns to Boston

1925-1927 - Pennies campaign to restore ship

1927-1930 - Extensive restoration.

1931-1934 - "Three Coast Tour" of U.S.

1997, Jul. 21 - USS Constitution sails for the first time in 116 years.

USS Constitution Statistics

Anchors:

2 Main Bowers	5300 lbs.
1 Sheet Anchor	5400 lbs.
1 Stream Anchor	1100 lbs.
2 Kedge Anchors	700-400 lbs.

Armament:

32 24-pound Long Guns; Crew: 6-14; Range: 1200 yards; Weight: 5600 lbs.
20 32-pound Carronades; Crew: 4-9; Range: 400 yds; Weight: 2200 lbs.
2 24-pound Bow Chasers; Range: 1000 yds.



Boats:

1 Longboat	36 ft.
2 Cutters	30 ft.
2 Whaleboats	28 ft.
1 Gig	28 ft.
1 Jolly	22 ft.
1 Punt	14 ft.

Crew:

(1812 era):
450, including:
55 Marines
30 small boys
20-30 officers & midshipmen
(Today):
50-80 active duty Navy Sailors

Ship's Stats:

Sail Area:	42,710 square ft.
Speed:	13+ knots
Foremast Height:	198 ft.
Mainmast Height:	220 ft.
Mizzenmast Height:	172 ft, 6 in.
Displacement:	2200 tons
Length:	204 ft (billet head to taffrail)
	175 ft (at waterline)





- The start of a legend -

After the Revolutionary War, our young nation’s economy depended upon sea borne commerce with other nations. Our merchants who traded in the Mediterranean found it increasingly difficult to conduct trade because of the attacks of the Barbary (North African) pirates, who used terrorist tactics to destroy our ships and enslave our Sailors. At this time the United States had no Navy, and our merchant ships were left vulnerable to attack.

To protect our economy and the lives of American citizens, Congress passed a bill on March 27, 1794, to establish the U.S. Navy that we know today.

CONSTITUTION, laid down that same year, was designed by Joshua Humphreys and Josiah Fox to be powerful enough to defeat any enemy about the same size and fast enough to outsail a stronger opponent.

Built at Edmond Harrt’s shipyard in Boston, the wood from which she was constructed came from states ranging from Maine to Georgia. The live oak, native only along our southeastern coast, came from islands off the coast of Georgia. Her masts came from Unity, Maine while South Carolina furnished the pine for her decks. Some sail canvas came from Rhode Island and the state of New Jersey provided the keel and cannon balls. Sails, gun carriages, and the anchors came from Massachusetts. Boston’s Paul Revere provided the spikes and copper sheathing.

On October 21, 1797, USS CONSTITUTION was commissioned, just three years after the laying of her keel. The total cost was \$302,718 out of a national budget of approximately \$5 million.

For centuries, the Barbary States of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli had levied tribute on even the most powerful European nations. If payment was refused, ships were captured and the crews dragged off to slavery. Before building our Navy, The United States paid more than a million dollars in presents and tribute to Algeria. The Bashaw of Tripoli, however, enraged that other nations were receiving more tribute than he, cut down the flagstaff at the American consulate on May 10, 1801, thus declaring war on the U.S.

CONSTITUTION was named as Commodore Edward Preble’s flagship in the Mediterranean in 1803. Upon arrival, American forces blockaded the port of Tripoli and bombarded fortifications and gunboats.

After CONSTITUTION was sent for repairs and to recruit more crewmembers in Lisbon, she returned to the blockade in March 1805. On June 3, 1805 a peace treaty was drawn up in her cabin by which tribute to Tripoli ceased and the American captives were released.

- War of 1812 -

In 1812, Great Britain reigned supreme on the sea. Her warships would seize American ships and enslave, or “impress”, our Sailors. A War with England, with our small Navy of 17 vessels against a thousand and more of the English Navy, seemed an impossible task. In addition, English naval officers had been contemptuous of our ships, referring to them as the American “fir-built frigates” and implying that their designs were clumsy and too heavy for rapid maneuvering.

On August 19, southeast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, a sail was sighted on the horizon and CONSTITUTION made for her with all sails set. It proved to be HMS GUERRIERE, the British 38-gun frigate that had pursued her a month earlier and was infamous for terrorizing American ships. When CONSTITUTION was still far astern, the British ship began firing. CONSTITUTION bore down upon the enemy in silence, the men stood patiently at their quarters, the gunners awaiting the order to fire. Not until the ships were nearly abreast did Captain Hull give the word, “Now, boys, pour into them!” A whole broadside struck the GUERRIERE and in 20 minutes her aft mast went over. CONSTITUTION passed ahead and sent a raking broadside crashing down the entire length of the enemy’s decks, which cut away much of the rigging.

Cannon shots from the GUERRIERE made no impression upon the outside planking of CONSTITUTION, but fell into the sea, whereupon an unknown Sailor shouted, “Huzza! Her sides are made of iron!” Thus CONSTITUTION gained the renowned title of “Old Ironsides.”

As the ships separated, GUERRIERE’s fore and main mast fell. She was left a helpless hulk and surrendered. The British lost 78 killed and wounded while the Americans lost only 14 in a battle that lasted only 35 minutes, one of the shortest in history.

It was a dramatic victory for America and for CONSTITUTION. In half an hour, the United States “rose to the rank of a first-class power” and the country was fired with fresh confidence and courage. More importantly the union was greatly strengthened

On February 20, 1815, CONSTITUTION had her last great fight. CONSTITUTION spotted two British ships off the island of Maderia. The frigate CYANE and the sloop LEVANT were smaller and lighter but their combined batteries were heavier than CONSTITUTION’s. Captain Stewart’s very skillful maneuvering prevented them from ganging up on him. Four hours later, both had surrendered.

The battle-scarred CONSTITUTION was laid up for about six years for extensive repairs, whereupon she went on two cruises to the Mediterranean.

In 1830, she was reported unseaworthy and condemned to be broken up. A poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., written while at Harvard University and entitled “Old Ironsides”, aroused such popular feeling that Congress appropriated money for rebuilding her in 1833.

From 1835 to 1855, CONSTITUTION made numerous voyages, the most important being her two year cruise around the world in 1844-45, under Captain John Percival, when she covered 52,279 miles in 495 days at sea. In Naples, Italy, in 1849, Pope Pius IX visited on board; the first Pontiff to step on U.S. territory.

From 1853 to 1855, Old Ironsides patrolled the coast of Africa searching for illegal slave traders.

During the Civil War, the sailing frigate gave way to the progress of shipbuilding. For several years, “Old Ironsides” was used as a training ship. In 1871, she was repaired in Philadelphia and in 1878 went on her last trip abroad, carrying American Exhibits to the Universal Exposition at Paris. Her long active career at sea closed in December 1881.

- Constitution in the 20th Century -

Old Ironsides was overhauled in the late 1920’s in Boston. Funds for the restoration were generously donated by the people of America, much of it raised in a “pennies campaign” by school children across the nation. The remaining balance necessary was appropriated by Congress.



From 1931-1934, CONSTITUTION toured both the East and West coasts, crossing through the Panama Canal enroute. The voyage started in Boston on July 2, 1931 and covered more than 22,000 miles and 75 cities. “Old Ironsides” returned to the Boston Navy Yard on May 7, 1934, after having over six million visitors.

On June 17, 1976, she made her Annual Turnaround Cruise for our nation’s bicentennial. Then, on July 10, she got underway to lead the Tall Ships into Boston Harbor. The very next day she made her third trip that year to greet Queen Elizabeth II, on board the Royal Yacht BRITANNIA.

In October 1997, during the ship’s 200th birthday, CONSTITUTION sailed for the first time in over a century, thrilling millions of patriotic Americans and proving once again that she is truly America’s Ship of State. The ship carries out her modern day mission as the Navy’s ambassador to the public and a representative of the thousands of Sailors and Marines that serve our country proudly.

www.oldironsides.com



Visitor Information

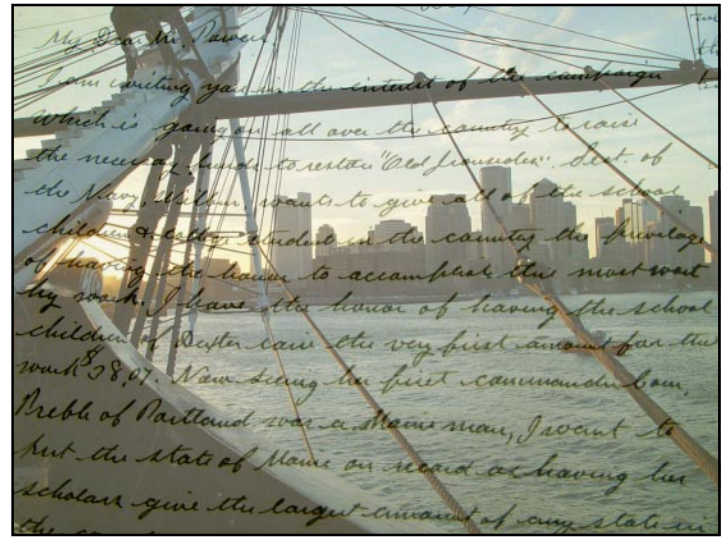
See our website for tour hours and special events.

**** ALL VISITORS ARE REQUIRED TO GO THROUGH A SCREENING PROCESS. IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO ARRIVE AT LEAST A HALF-HOUR EARLY TO ALLOW TIME TO GET THROUGH OUR SECURITY TENT. PLEASE READ THE SECURITY CLEARANCE PROCEDURES ON OUR WEBSITE IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO VISIT THE SHIP IN THE NEAR FUTURE.**

WE APPRECIATE YOUR COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING REGARDING THESE PROCEDURES REQUIRED BY THE US NAVY FOR YOUR SAFETY, THE SAFETY OF THE CREW AND THE PRESERVATION OF THE OLDEST COMMISSIONED WARSHIP AFLOAT.

USS Constitution

"Old Ironsides"



Welcome aboard “Old Ironsides,” USS CONSTITUTION, the oldest commissioned warship afloat in the entire world.

Still a part of the U.S. Navy ship roster, she is tangible evidence of America’s proud naval heritage as well as a modern day representative of America’s patriotism and pride.

